

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20512

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20512

April 23, 2018

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow,

As you consider reauthorization of the Farm Bill, I urge you to continue the longstanding tradition of bipartisan support for America's farmers, ranchers, and vulnerable families. I supported the 2014 Farm Bill because it preserved and extended a much needed safety net for Missouri agriculture while also providing critical support for nutrition programs. The historic partnership between the anti-hunger community and production agriculture has transcended party lines for decades and this partnership must continue.

At a time of record low farm incomes, Missouri farmers need a robust federal farm safety net. Not only are producers facing challenging market conditions, but recent policy actions have further increased uncertainty. The potential for retaliatory trade actions by trading partners make Farm Bill commodity programs, most especially crop insurance, an absolute necessity for Missouri producers.

Beyond crop insurance, support for dairy and cotton programs are important to many regions of my state. I am pleased to see an increased baseline for this Farm Bill and hope that you and your colleagues will provide adequate relief to dairy and cotton farmers. As great stewards of the land, Missouri farmers also depend on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is necessary to provide producers with important tools to accelerate their work preserving our soil and protecting the natural environment.

In addition to support for Missouri farmers and ranchers, the Farm Bill provides support to Missouri's most vulnerable families through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant, and Children (WIC). In Missouri alone, over 810,000 individuals in every corner of the state depend on the SNAP program for nearly \$1.18 billion in food benefits.

I am deeply concerned by proposals from the Administration and the House of Representatives to undermine nutrition assistance. Both of you have shown strong leadership in rejecting the Administration's proposal to replace SNAP's retail-based benefit dispersal with a "harvest-box" program. This plan is demeaning to the hundreds of thousands of Missourians who know best how to feed their families and supplement their groceries with SNAP benefits. I applaud your opposition to this proposal. Equally concerning are efforts by the House to alter eligibility requirements and asset testing. Changes to eligibility requirements would not only hurt families in all corners of my state, but such changes would set into motion a partisan Farm Bill.

As you are both aware from your considerable efforts on the 2014 Farm Bill, starting the debate with a partisan product and politicizing nutrition programs has the potential to entirely halt Farm Bill negotiations and ultimate passage. Failure to maintain the bipartisan Farm Bill coalition of agriculture and anti-hunger advocates is a bad deal for Missouri and the American people.

With farmers struggling to make ends meet and persistent food insecurity, Missourians cannot afford a delayed Farm Bill reauthorization because of partisan politics. I encourage you to maintain your commitment to our agriculture community and vulnerable families by producing a bipartisan Farm Bill with robust support for the farm safety net and nutrition programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Claire" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "McCaskill".

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator